

# THE COCHISE COUNTY HISTORICAL JOURNAL

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PEARCE

## THE COCHISE COUNTY Historical Journal

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Cochise County  
Historical Society

Founded in 1966

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the Past  
for  
The Future**

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COVER PHOTO

John Pearce. Photo courtesy of  
Ghost Town Trail News

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## Editorial Letter

Dear Reader,

We were saddened to learn of the loss of long-time member and staunch supporter of local history, Harry Ames, who passed away December 31, 2002. Last April, he and Nan were honored by the Arizona Historical Society as recipients of the Al Merito Award, which is given to a non-professional person or organization for outstanding contributions to preserving Arizona history.

I am sure you will find this issue of the Journal exciting as you read about the town of Pearce. We found an excellent article about the Commonwealth Mine in some back issues of the *Brewery Gulch Gazette*. Read how Pearce got its name.

The story of Pearce would not be complete without including the Old Store history, which Patty Burris has graciously provided. The Burris' are in the process of restoring the old store and it is a wonderful place to visit.

Jim Burnett, hometown boy, consented to write the history of Pearce School, which entailed a lot of research and effort.

Mary Magoffin added her bit with a short article on "The Old Timer's Rendezvous", which takes place as many former students and friends return to the Pearce School for a no-frills reunion.

The book review is on "*Ramona*," which was taken from a 1914 year book. This was the first year Mary's mother, Grace Nebold, taught school. *Ramona* was written to call attention to how badly the Indians were treated. You will marvel at her life and the trials she endured as she suffered heartache after heartache.

Bill Hudspeth and Bonnie Matney Jennings are our Guardians



of History. Bill has so ably served as our president the last three years. Unfortunately, Bill is not enjoying the best of health at this time, so please keep him in your thoughts and prayers. Both are very worthy of this honor. We are including a tribute to Jay Van Orden for his many years of service to AHS.

Please note the Annual Meeting will be November 2<sup>nd</sup>. We felt it was quite successful last year when we had to change the date. Please mark your calendar now and plan to attend.

Again, if you have something you would like to have published in one of our upcoming Journals, please submit your ideas or manuscripts. Next issue we are going to focus on the Turkey Creek area.

Many hands have helped with the production of this journal, and I would personally like to thank each one of them for all the hard work and research that they do to make it a success.

*Norma Lavanchy  
For the Editorial Committee*

~~~~~

As we remember Harry Ames, we of the Cochise County Historical Society feel the following poem sums up Harry's life.

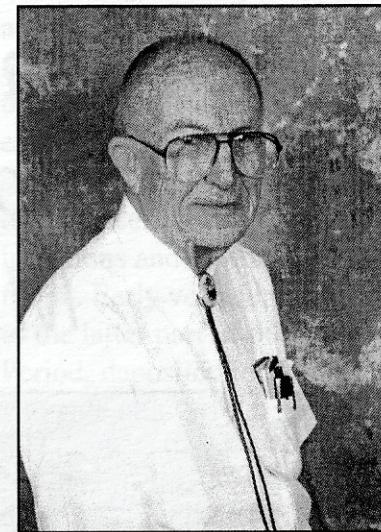
### *The Criterion*

A life too oft we try to measure  
By hours and years and earthly pleasure.  
Yes, by these yardsticks, try to span  
The earthly time allotted man.  
And when life ends, we often say,  
This man is gone before his day.  
Rate not his life by the years it's run  
But by the kindness, the good he's done.  
And then perhaps you'll dry your tears  
He's lived it full, his span of years.

Anonymous

## **In Memoriam Harry Ames**

### **A Lifetime of Service**



Douglas is fortunate, indeed, to have had a native son who worked so hard for the good of his hometown.

Among his many achievements were 18 years on the City Council; 25 years with Phelps Dodge; assistant county school superintendent and coordinator for the neighborhood Youth Corps. He was a member of the Elks Lodge for 56 years and a 58 year member of the American Legion.

Arizona and local history was always a big interest in Harry's life, starting as a member and past-president of the Cochise County Historical Society and the Douglas Historical Society. He served as president of the Arizona Historical Society for two terms. During that time he was instrumental in building and starting operations of the Marley Center Museum in Tempe.

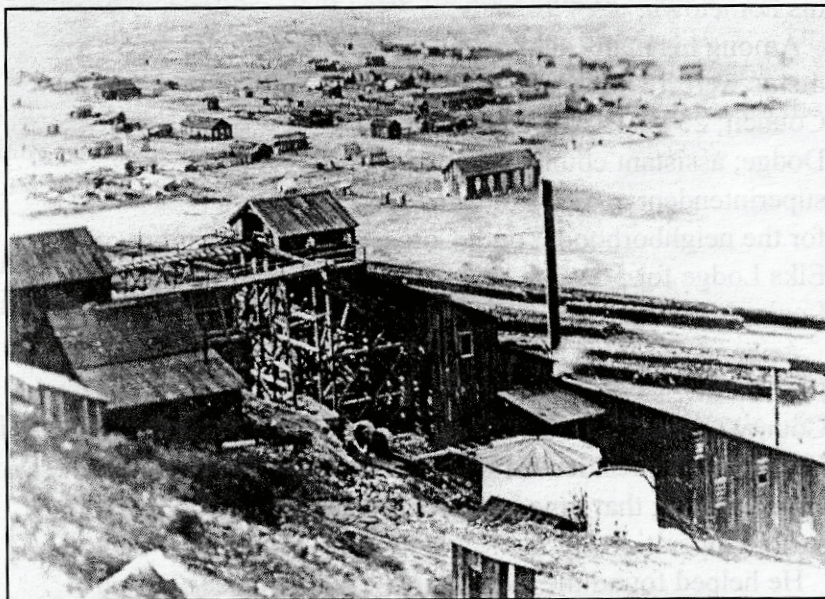
He helped found the Douglas Historical Society, which operates the Douglas/Williams House Museum. This house provides quarters for the Douglas Historical Society; the Cochise Genealogical Society; the Douglas High School Alumni Association and the Cochise County Historical Society.

Harry and Nan were awarded the prestigious El Merito Award for Outstanding Achievement in preserving Arizona history, for their work with the Douglas/Williams House.

Harry always had long-range goals and worked tirelessly to achieve them, not for his glory, but for the good of all concerned. He will be sorely missed.



# Pearce's Commonwealth Mine



*Commonwealth mill under construction about 1900.*

by Pat Robertson

If you were a little old town with a past, you might try to hide it by covering it up with a guise of modern practicality, or you might flaunt yourself as a come-one-come-all tourist attraction, and then again, you might do as Pearce, Arizona, has done. Pearce has adopted a middle-of-the-road approach to life, combining trade with nearby ranchers, appealing to that brand of very curious driver who meanders through back roads

wondering, "What happened here?" and a way of life to the residents who have always lived in Pearce and intend to die there. Pearce of 1966 is calm, pleasant, and quite friendly. The old jail stands empty, as do many houses within walking distance of the General Store, which is operated by Mr. Dooley, the president of Lincoln College, who intends to supplement his collection of Pearce history with a room devoted to Lincolnia.

You have to look closely at the adobe wall to one side of the General Store to imagine one of the busiest of Pearce's seven early-day saloons. The corrugated iron roof of what must have been the showplace of Pearce is rusting away. Broken windowpanes, like jagged eyelashes, look bleakly at Pearce Hill, the site of the Commonwealth Mine, which is the beginning point for the whole story.

The area in which Pearce is situated lies in the foothills of the Dragoon Mountains and is composed of several types of igneous rock, crisscrossed by dikes and intrusions, eroded

and faulted. Since magma, molten material seeking a way up through the crust of the earth, seeks the path of least resistance, faulted areas are often places where magmatic intrusions and extrusions are found. Early volcanism, prior to the latter part of the Tertiary Period, deposited most of the valuable non-ferrous metals, and, in the case of Pearce Hill, the magma that intruded the fault contained both gold and silver. Generally speaking, the hanging wall side of the vein was richer than the footwall, although both contained valuable deposits. Gold occurring in the vein was mainly native, uncombined with other minerals, while silver occurred in combination with other minerals, in chlorides, bromides, sulphides, and iodides. The ore was mainly quartzite. Today rock hounds can find many specimens of beautifully banded quartz on the hill. During the millions of years between the deposition of the ores and the present day, erosion wore away at the country rock in which the vein was located. Since different



kinds of rock wear away at different rates, outcroppings of rock, including part of the quartz that contained the vein, were formed. It was one of these outcroppings which caught the attention of the discoverer of the lode.

There are several stories about the discovery of the treasure in Pearce Hill. Some are distorted by time and romance, but each one has the spirit of Ponce De Leon tripping over the fountain of youth. "Ma" Pearce ran one of the more popular boarding houses in Tombstone for silver miners prior to 1893, when the bottom started dropping out as the water level rose in the mines. Her husband was technically a cattleman, but John Pearce had the yen for minerals, be they gold or silver, which was a normal, if chronic ailment of many residents of the Tombstone area at that time. He had tried mining and prospecting before, but cattle, his wife agreed, were much safer and more sensible than chasing after some glint in the ground. It began to look like the mines weren't going to

revive, and many of the residents of Tombstone began to look for more prosperous surroundings. The boarding house began to look less and less profitable, so Ma Pearce agreed to the suggestion of her husband and sons that the family should move east over the Dragoon Mountains into the Sulphur Springs Valley and start a ranch. After all, a ranch would be something that the boys could take care of in their parents' old age. Now that the Apaches had been pretty well cleared out of the Valley, they shouldn't have too much trouble. So Johnny, Ma and the sons packed up and headed east over the Dragoons. They settled on a ranch about 20 miles east of Tombstone, and had the operation started rather well by the spring of 1894.

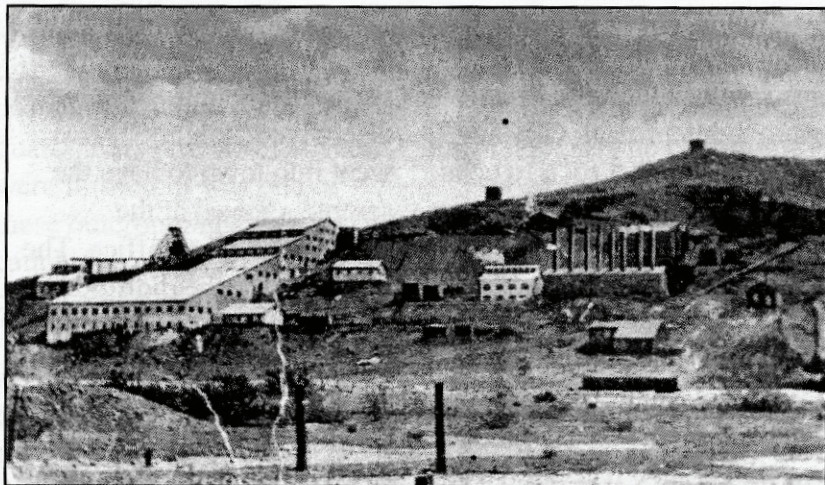
Here the stories begin to deviate. The first story credits John Pearce with discovery of the mine. He would ride out of a morning, taking a lunch with him in a saddlebag, ostensibly to check the range and the cattle. Ma and the boys knew better but figured that he was probably happier out

prospecting, and he might just see some good range even if it were unintentional. One day he sat down on a rock to open his lunch, and, out of habit, began picking over the rocks nearby. He cracked one against another and both split, showing free gold. In another version, the split glinted silver, hinting that the Sulphur Springs Valley was good for more than just raising cattle. The second story makes John Pearce out to be a good cattleman; out on the range chasing his cattle. Stopping on a hill, he picked up a rock to throw at a dog, or, in another story, a cow, and again out of an established curiosity, paused to examine the piece before he heaved it at the animal. In both stories the results are the same, and the outcropping was discovered. In a third story, one of the Pearce sons is said to have been a bit of a prodigal, and while away from the ranch, he happened across the outcropping. Received with open arms at home, he immediately regained the family favor, and the father and sons set out for the site

arm in arm. No matter what the story, the mine was discovered. Johnny Pearce went into town to have the sample assayed at the Tombstone assay office. The silver sample he didn't throw at the cow assayed out at 2100 ounces per ton. Pearce filed six claims. These were the Ocean Wave, the Commonwealth, the One and All, the Silver Crown, the North Bell, and the Silver Wave. Further reports from the assay office made Pearce glad he had filed the claims. Samples assayed at \$22,000 per ton in silver, and \$5,000 per ton in gold. The Pearces rounded up enough ore to fill a car, which they freighted from the site to Cochise, a distance of about 16 miles. From Cochise, the car was conveyed by rail to the smelter in El Paso. The first carload contained 100 ounces of silver per ton, worth \$80 per ton, and one ounce of gold, worth \$20 per ton.

During the time the first shipment was being collected, the word leaked out in Tombstone that Johnny Pearce had found something worth





*Commonwealth Mine circa 1915.*

finding. The leak turned into a flood, and pretty soon the remaining residents of Tombstone were commandeering every available mode of transportation to get out to Pearce Hill. First arrivals were those who owned their own horses, next came those who could rent a rig or a horse from the livery stable. Others came in heavy wagons, and following up the pack were the prospectors with burros and those who could travel only on foot. Claims were filed for miles around the hill, and with the arrival of wives, families, and profiteers, a camp began to spring from the desert like wild grass urged on

by a spring rain. Temporary housing, tents, lean-tos, and brush shacks dotted the space just north of the hill, and one entrepreneur, who must have had a hunch about the dearth of water, set up a canvas-covered lean-to, underneath which two barrels of whiskey and a tin cup lay for one and all to admire. It wasn't long, however, before the water haulers began to ply their trade, hauling water in from a spring in the Driest Mountains. The water-haulers were among the biggest capitalists in the camp, providing water, which residents depended on for drinking, making adobes for their homes, washing dishes,

and perhaps an occasional bath, if the necessity arose.

After the reports on the first carload of ore were received back in the camp, John Pearce began sinking the No. 1 shaft. The shaft proceeded downward some 50 feet beginning on the west end of the original outcropping and cutting the vein from the hanging wall into the footwall. It was found that the ore was generally of the same value as the first carload, which must have pleased the Pearce family immensely.

Timbers used to shore up the first shaft were hauled in from the Chiricahua Mountains. Wood-haulers found a ready market in the camp as well, where firewood was soon in demand. This was before that part of the Chiricahua Mountains was included in the Coronado National Forest. When it was included, the charges against the stumpage rate made hauling timber out prohibitive and Oregon pine was substituted in the mine for shoring shafts. After 1898, the Commonwealth was one of the first mines in Arizona to use petroleum for fuel.

As soon as it became fairly well established that the Commonwealth Mine was going to be a rich producer, Johnny Pearce was besieged with offers to lease or sell his claims. Although he wasn't too anxious to lose control of the claims, Pearce's sons, or perhaps the rather slow return on the mine, persuaded him to consider handing over the title to another person, for, as Ma insisted, a suitable amount of money that wasn't going to play out at the half-way point. In November of 1895, a Silver City, New Mexico banker, John Brockman, who had visited the property, secured an option on the mine for \$275,000, which was to be paid over a two-year period. Ma Pearce got her finger in the pie again. Not one to be caught unprepared, she demanded and got the measure of security that having a franchise on the only boarding house to be allowed at the mine would give. If her husband was to run through the money, she was determined to have a way to support herself, and the boarding house looked like a



good bet. After all, what were a few more years over a hot stove, if it were really necessary.

John Brockman went into partnership with two men from Philadelphia, R.A.F. Penrose and D.M. Barringer, and they organized the Commonwealth Mining and Milling Company. After working the mine for a few weeks, they decided that they could probably pay Pearce the amount sooner than they had thought, so they offered him a cash settlement of \$250,000, instead of the \$275,000 to be paid at the end of two years. Pearce and his family accepted the offer, so the Company was capitalized at \$1,000,000 with a bond issue of \$250,000 on the property, putting a total worth of the Company at \$1,250,000.

The first officers of the Company were the partners; Penrose was chosen president, Barringer held the position of secretary and treasurer, and Brockman, whose name is also listed as Brocknow, acted as general manager for the concern. The million dollars in capital was obtained partly

through the issuance of stock. Some major blocks of shares went overseas to England and Germany, where several prominent members of the nobility of both countries held Commonwealth stock.

Meanwhile, the Company began operating by straightening the No. 1 shaft to a 60 degree angle, and followed this path down the vein to water level, which was 267 feet. The Company began sinking another shaft, known as "A" shaft, at a point 150 feet west of the No. 1 shaft. "A" shaft was also sunk to water level, and ore was hoisted from both shafts by means of a one-horse whim. The ore was then freighted to Cochise to the railroad and thence on to the smelter. Soon after shipments were begun, the bond issue was retired; in addition, a dividend of \$100,000 per month was paid for six months. Most of the ore was coming from Discovery Stope, a stope being the block of ground over a drift which connects vertically two shafts, and out of which ore is taken. "B" shaft was subsequently started

600 feet east of the No. 1; the largest ore body found to that point was located in "B" shaft.

The ore was hauled out at irregular intervals in wagons to the railroad at Cochise, and supplies were returned in the same manner. The wagons were run in trains of four with a total capacity of 50 tons per train. Each train used 20 horses or 24 mules, depending on whose account you read.

By May of 1896, Brockman and his partners had complete possession of the Commonwealth Mine, and at about that time, the charges against the ore were as follows:

|                             |         |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Hauling ore to Cochise      | \$ 2.50 |
| Freight: Cochise to El Paso | 3.50    |
| Treatment of ore at smelter | 7.50    |
| Cost of mining              | 2.58    |
| TOTAL charges, per ton      | \$16.08 |

At the time the Company came into full possession, Brockman began planning on a large-scale operation, complete with a mill on the site of the mine. The first mill was operational by 1898, and utilized a pan-amalgamation process to extract 83 percent of the ore. Coarse crushing was done by a Blake crusher,

a dry process. Fine grinding was accomplished by means of German ball mills. The capacity of the original operation was 30 tons per day, which was soon increased to 200 tons per day by the addition of 60 one- thousand pound stamps.

The stamp milling process consisted of feeding the rough-crushed ore into a battery box into which five stamps are dropped. Some mercury is fed into the battery, which combines with particles of gold, forming an amalgam. The impact of the dropping stamps causes a splash onto the front of the battery, where there is a renewable screen through which particles of a certain size, depending on the kind of ore, may pass. Discharge removed from the battery flows over an amalgamating plate, which collects any gold not previously in contact with the mercury. The amalgamation plates and stamp batteries are cleaned, and the residue is refined to remove any traces of mercury. The one disadvantage to using this process in the Commonwealth



was that the silver sulphide found in the mine, as well as any gold that may be found as a telluride (combined with Sulphur) could not be amalgamated. The former condition certainly existed, and the latter may have also.

At the same time the stamp mill was brought in, rolls were added to the intermediate crushing operation. These improvements caused the following change in the cost statement:

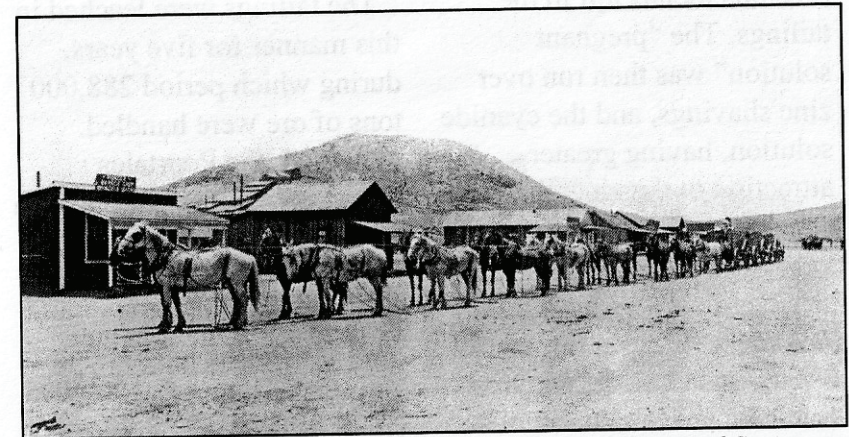
|                     |        |
|---------------------|--------|
| Milling cost        | 2.00   |
| Mining cost         | 1.60   |
| TOTAL cost, per ton | \$3.60 |

Two years later, in June of 1900, the mill burned down. The Commonwealth Company immediately began construction of a new mill, which was operational in January 1901. This mill was even better equipped, having eighty stamps instead of the original sixty. Also during the latter part of 1900, "C" shaft was sunk a hundred feet into the footwall of the main vein. Crosscuts were run connecting the new shaft with all main drifts. During the cutting of the second level station, the Smith vein was discovered at

a point some 80 feet into the footwall. Despite this discovery, it soon became evident that the period of high-grade mining had ended, and the work would be in low-grade ores from that point on.

Hence, after the new mill was put into operation, the method of mining was changed from stulls to square sets, a change which was made necessary by the widening of the stopes to 60 feet and by the mining of low-grade ores from the footwall zone. Square sets are lattice-type frameworks supporting the walls of a stope much more safely when the stope is larger than could be handled by ordinary timbers or stulls.

The second mill had a capacity of 240 tons per day, and mill heads averaged ten ounces in silver per ton, as compared with the old figures of 18 ounces of silver per ton. The mine continued to be profitable, however, as seen in the sale price of Richard Penrose, who resigned as president of the company in 1903. His interest went to the Count de Pourtales, one of the original stockholders, for a



*Horses pulling ore wagon. Photo courtesy Arizona Historical Society*

nice round million dollars. Brockman continued as manager of the operation, and A.Y. Smith came in as superintendent. The second mill continued in operation until 1905, when the company began having problems. In 1904, the ore had reached water level, and huge pumps were installed; ore removal was slow and profits began dropping. The big stopes were getting too big for safety, and it was decided in 1905 that they should be allowed to cave. The mine was shut down and ten days later 500,000 tons of waste came in.

Pourtales decided that it would be better to lease the mine for removal of any remaining ore, and in 1905 he did lease it to A.Y. Smith, the

mine superintendent, and D.T. Swatling, the mill superintendent, thus Pourtales was able to recover part of his purchase price in royalties.

Smith and Swatling constructed a cyanide leaching plant and went to work on the tailings at a capacity of 230 tons per day. The tailings were hoisted 300 feet on a tramway by means of a balanced hoist on which side dump, V-bottom, one-ton cars were used. The plant consisted of six California redwood tanks over which the tramway ran for filling purposes. These tanks were 40 feet in diameter and six feet deep. The tailings were mixed in these tanks with a weak solution of alkaline cyanide solution, which combined with the



precious metals left in the tailings. The "pregnant solution" was then run over zinc shavings, and the cyanide solution, having greater attraction to the zinc than to the gold or silver, combined with the zinc, leaving the gold or silver to precipitate out. The treatment cycle employed by Smith and Swatling ran as follows:

One day to fill the tanks.  
Four days of solution contact.  
One day to unload the tanks.

The tanks were unloaded by contractors who shoveled the pulp through gates in the bottom of the tanks and into dump cars, after which the pulp was precipitated over the zinc shavings. The cost analysis breakdown for the cyanide leaching operation is:

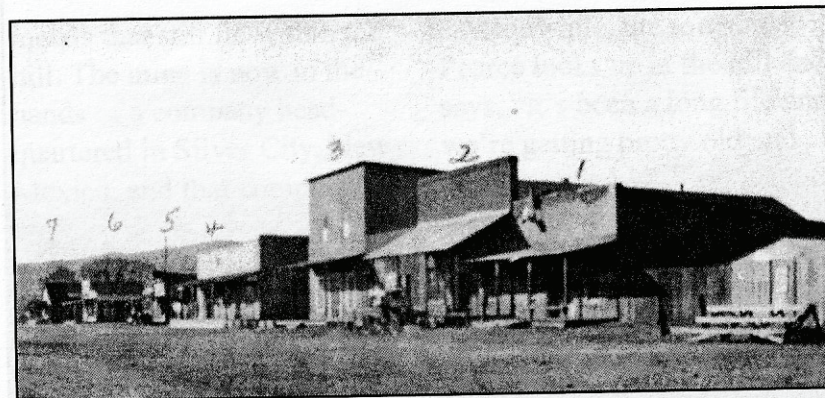
|                            |        |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Loading in tailing pond    | .10    |
| Hoisting and dumping       | .05    |
| Leaching                   | .26    |
| Unloading                  | .12    |
| Precipitation              | .09    |
| Power                      | .10    |
| Repairs                    | .05    |
| Refining, supervision, etc | .07    |
| TOTAL cost, per ton        | \$ .84 |
| <hr/>                      |        |
| Gross value of ore         | 3.00   |
| At 50% of extraction       | 1.50   |
| Less cost of treatment     | .84    |
| NET return per ton         | \$.66  |

The tailings were leached in this manner for five years, during which period 288,000 tons of ore were handled.

In 1906, the Pourtales interests extended the lease on the Commonwealth Mine to the mine, and part of the mill was put into operation under the guidance of Smith and Swatling. They ran new crosscuts into the caved areas and mined and milled about 187,000 tons of ore. In 1909, however, the cyanide plant burned down, forcing a halt to operations. Smith and Swatling, however, felt that the mine was far from played out, and decided to purchase the mine; lock, stock, and barrel, which they did. Plans were made for future operations.

Future operations, in this case, meant the sale of the mine in 1910 to the Montana Tonopah and Milling Company. Swatling disappeared from the picture, but A.Y. Smith continued on with the new owners.

Officers of the company were: President, Charles E. Knox; Vice-President, A.Y. Smith; Secretary-treasurer,



*Pearce's Main Street circa 1920, looking south. 1. Wilson's warehouse; 2. Wilson's store; 3. Town and Country Club; 4. Pearce Post Office; 5. Doug's place; 6. Pearce Cafe; 7. Palace Hotel.*

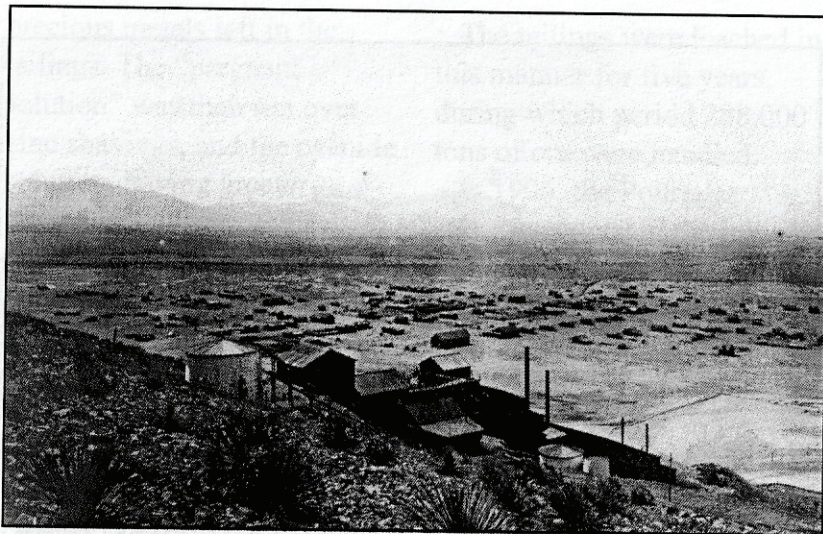
F.L. Bryant and General Manager, Edgar A. Collins.

Smith continued to direct the mine's activity. A new 350-ton cyanide mill was built at a cost of \$283,000 and the Company sank "D" shaft to the eighth level. All the main drifts were connected to "D" shaft, and the operation continued from early in 1913 until May of 1917. As the mining went deeper, especially below water level, profits decreased. Over the four-year period, 375,000 tons of ore were milled at an average cost of \$4.20 per ton with an average value of \$5.22 per ton. Such low value left too little profit, and the company ceased operations in

1917. A.Y. Smith, however, retained his confidence in the value of the mine and, after 20 years association with the Commonwealth, again secured a lease in August of 1917.

The entrance of the United States into World War I caused an increase in the price of silver, and at the same time the Douglas Phelps Dodge smelter needed ores with a high content of silica to use in smelter flux. So, Smith, under the name of the Commonwealth Development Co., began shipping ores to Douglas via the railroad spur that now connected Pearce to Douglas. Crude ore was shipped as long as the price of silver remained fairly high,





*First mill at mine. Photo courtesy Arizona Historical Society*

and as long as the need for silicious ores continued at the smelter. Between the time Smith began shipping and 1927, 115,000 tons of ore containing 12.5 ounces of silver and 0.10 ounces of gold per ton were shipped to the Douglas smelter under the silica contract.

Around 1930 the price of silver dropped to around 30 cents and the low price of copper forced many copper smelters to close. Low prices, closed smelters, plus the fact that diamond drilling at the Commonwealth had proven that no more commercial-quality ore could be expected below the level of the lowest

diggings, all combined to shut down the mine again, this time for a long period.

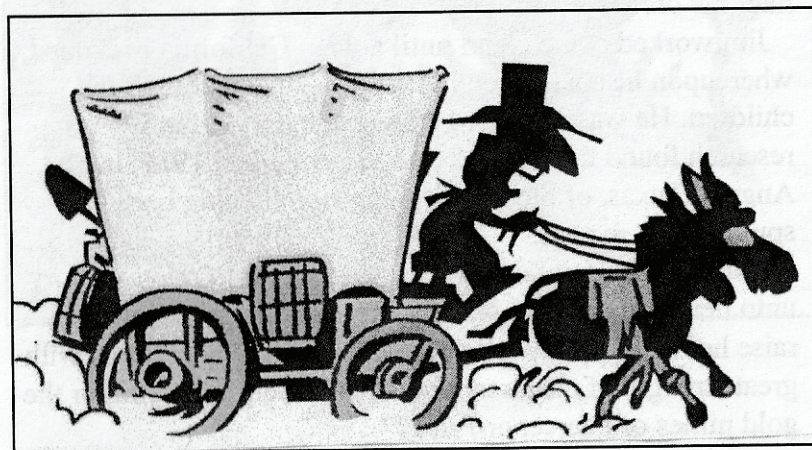
Total production of the Commonwealth Mine from 1895 until 1929 is estimated at 940,000 tons, with the value concentrated 75 to 80 percent in silver, and the balance in gold. Gross profits on the ore are recorded as \$10,525,000 with gold earning \$2,535,000, and silver \$7,990,000.

This didn't end the Commonwealth Mine for good, however. Modern extraction methods may yet be used to re-refine the old tailings, and new mining techniques may be able to clean formerly unprofitable

metals that still lie within the hill. The mine is now in the hands of a company headquartered in Silver City, New Mexico, and that company has built several shiny new buildings on the site in hopes that the Commonwealth is not yet exhausted. The superintendent believes that it will take many months to begin the operation, and even longer to determine the economic considerations which will decide whether or not John Pearce's mine can still be worked.

Meanwhile, the town of Pearce looks up at the hill and says, "It's been a long life and we're getting pretty old and tired, you and I." And Pearce Hill looks down at the town and says, "Yeah, you're right, but we aren't dead yet, are we?"

*(This article first appeared in the "Bisbee Brewery Gazette," which is no longer in existence and was written by Pat Robinson while she was a student at the University of Arizona.)*





# Pearce or Price?

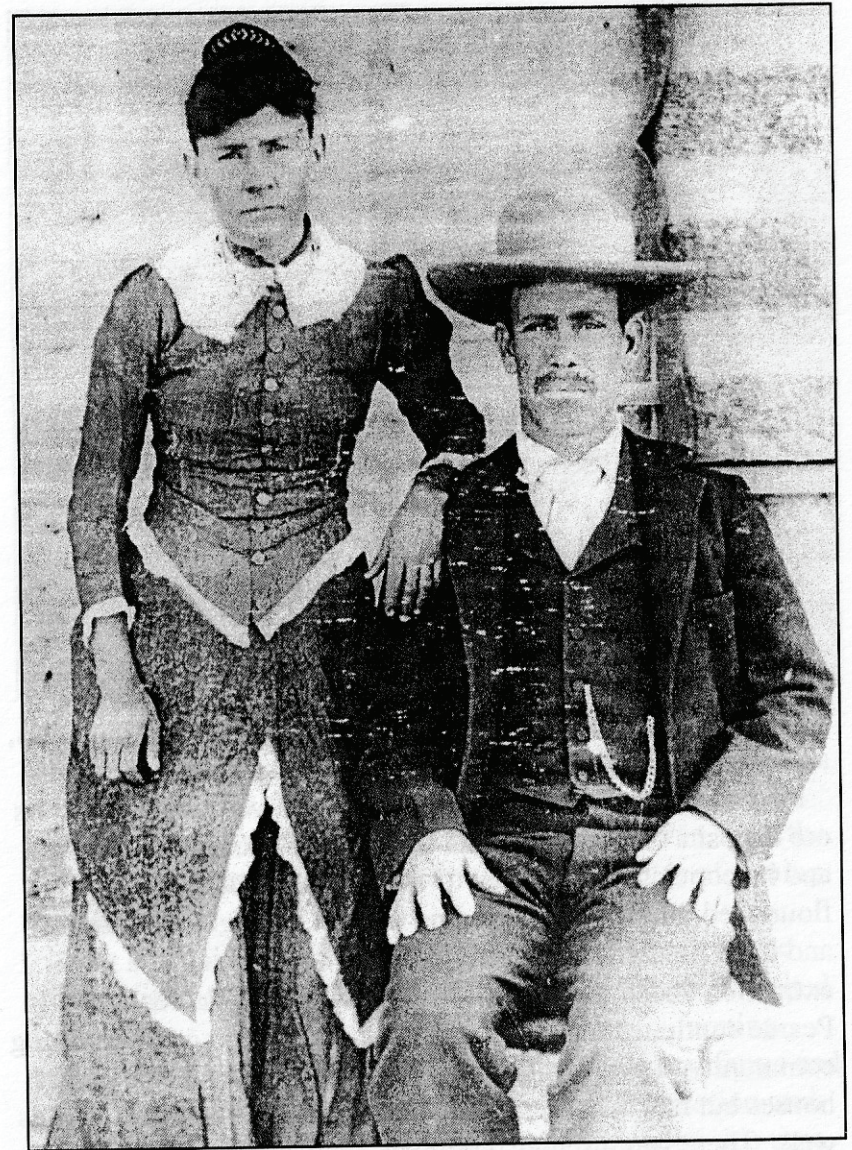
Flora Von Price Jolly, a descendant of late nineteenth century homesteaders, has yet another story about the discovery of gold in the Pearce area. The story concerns her great-grandfather, James Anderson Price. So, read on and decide for yourself, should it be Pearce or Price?

“Jim told the following story. He claimed that he and his good friend, Johnny Pearce, were on a cattle drive to Willcox when the gold was discovered. Jim stopped to relieve himself and noticed the gold shining in the wet rock. He put the rock into his chap pocket and continued to Willcox.

Several days later Johnny Pearce sent Jim to deliver some horses to Willcox. Since Johnny Pearce was on his way to Tombstone, Jim entrusted him with the rock to have it assayed. When they got together again, Johnny informed Jim that he had filed a claim in his own name, but he VERY generously gave Jim a job at \$1.00 per day plus mules to haul the ore!

Jim worked at the claim until golden California beckoned, whereupon he abandoned his wife, Mollie, and their ten children. He was not heard from again. Later, family research found that he had died in December, 1936, in San Angelo, Texas, of blood poisoning from having been spurred by a rooster.

Jim’s abandoned wife, Mollie (Mary Ann) Price is a story unto herself. She went on to homestead her property and raise her children as well as another child. She did this with great strength of character and without help from Jim, or the gold mines of Pearce, or Price?”



*James Anderson and Mary Ann Price.*



# The Old Pearce Mercantile

*(From the Building Assessment Report – Old Pearce Store – Pearce, Arizona by Ralph Comey Architects)*

...The gold mining period began in 1893 when gold was discovered in Prescott. In southern Arizona, copper mining began in Bisbee in 1877 and continued until 1974. Bisbee had a peak population of 35,000 people and a picturesque town grew up to support the mining. Silver was discovered in Tombstone in 1878 and the mining continued until the mines flooded in 1886. During that time, the population grew to 15,000 people. Tombstone had a reputation for lawlessness, but for the most part, it was a genteel town. Besides the saloons, it had two banks, a school, a newspaper, four churches, an opera, and many community organizations.

Pearce was established in 1894 after gold was discovered. Its ore deposits of silver and gold were richer than Tombstone's and its population increased to 1,500. For a while, mining flourished, but in 1904, flooding limited underground mining and in 1910, there was a serious fire. Most mining and mineral extraction ended in 1927. However, as mining decreased, Pearce continued to serve the surrounding farming and ranching community. Like Tombstone, Pearce had its share of pleasure houses but had many respectable organizations and activities as well. There was a school, churches, clubs, fraternal organizations, a motion picture theater, and a number of civic and recreational groups. As in many of the early towns in Arizona, the leading citizens in Pearce wanted to establish a genuine community, not just a mining camp.

In spite of these ambitions, Pearce, like most mining towns,



*The Old Pearce Mercantile as it appears today.*

was never able to sustain a consistent pattern of growth and development. The prosperity of Pearce always was closely related to the fortunes of mining and also, to a degree, with the national economy. Agriculture never took the place of mining as an economic support.

In the late 1800s ranching was the leading endeavor in the Sulphur Springs Valley around Pearce. By 1910, ranching had declined considerably and it was supplemented by farming. Agriculture started to decline in the 1920s, and many farms and homesteads failed. In the 1930s, as the Great Depression took hold, the agricultural economy collapsed. Mining, by this time, had effectively ended, and in 1933, the railroad service to Pearce stopped. So agriculture was as unstable as mining.

Thus, in the 1930s, Pearce began to crumble. The Commonwealth mill was torn down and sold for junk. People razed their houses to avoid having to pay property taxes. By 1935, less than 50 people lived in Pearce and on the nearby



ranches. The only buildings left were the schoolhouse, Renaud's store, the Post Office, the Jail House, a service station and a few houses. Everything else was gone.

The buildings in the larger towns fared better. Many of the original structures in Bisbee remain, and today it looks like an ancient hill town with its dense brick commercial district and attractive frame houses climbing steep hillsides. Tombstone still is a fascinating western town, although numerous wooden buildings were dismantled and hauled to Pearce. Although changes have occurred, the commercial streets in Tombstone have shaded walkways and ornamented facades, creating a unique urban quality.

Most of the ghost towns were abandoned however, and their buildings have disappeared. When the buildings became empty, they soon were at the mercy of the elements. Roofs collapsed, adobe deteriorated, and wood decayed. The houses were vandalized. All that remains in most towns are some foundation lines, a few adobe walls, and an occasional concrete shell.

Unfortunately, most of the losses occurred long before the preservation movement became active in the late 1960s. That the Old General Store (in Pearce) has survived to this day is truly remarkable given the decline of the surrounding town. But the store has always been a special place.

The Old Pearce Store was built in 1896 by Soto Brothers & Charles Renaud. The Soto Brothers moved from Tombstone to Pearce to open a new store, which proved to be too small, so a larger new store was built.

The partners had ambitious plans for their store. They conceived and built a practical and unusually handsome structure. This building would advertise their business and also express confidence and stability. It became the hub and heart of Pearce. It conveyed a certain urbanity and civic pride.

The store was constructed as a long rectangle with 21 inch thick adobe walls and a high gable roof. Later, the adobe was stuccoed. The roof was constructed of wood trusses with a



*An inside view of the old mercantile store. Photo courtesy of Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum*

corrugated metal surface. A spacious shed-roofed porch covered with corrugated metal extended across the front. There were arched show windows and an attractive arched entrance. Above the porch, there was a handsome false front and central spire. At some point during the early years, an ornamental stamped metal facade and parapet finials were added.

To the rear of the store was a lower structure containing store rooms. On the south side there was a fenced-in yard and a long storage shed and stock barn. The building and its outbuildings were utilitarian except for the impressive street front.

The interior was impressive, too. The main sales area measured about 75 feet by 30 feet with a 14 foot high, decorative stamped metal ceiling. The room was well appointed with handsome hardwood counters and 10 foot high shelving along the walls. Furnishings included high access ladders with runners, plate glass display cases, a cash register, telephones, a hand-scrolled safe, a roll-top desk, and a pot-bellied stove. There were other items of equipment needed in the store including a coffee mill, meat slicer, nail bins, and



later, a gas pump outside.

The store for many years served the community and surrounding area as a general mercantile and banking center. In old photographs, the signs above the porch proudly explained the wares – first, “General Merchandise and Lumber”; then, “General Merchandise and Farm Implements, Lumber and Mining Supplies”; and still later, “Chevron Gasoline and Commercial Herefords.”

Roy Colbert, who came to Pearce as a child in 1915 and left in 1922, has the following recollections of the Pearce Store:

“When one entered the store, there were old-fashioned glass counters on the right which displayed a small collection of costume jewelry and pins, Westlock pocket watches, other gift items, and all kinds of tobacco, including red cans of Prince Albert, sacks of Duke’s Mixtures for hand-rolled cigarettes and Owl Cigars. There were sporting goods here as well as in the central sales area.

Next came groceries, and they were stacked on the shelves behind the counters. Below those shelves were drawers which contained dried beans, corn and peas. These items were weighed in a hanging scale and sold by the pound.

On the right, beyond the side exit door were such tools as wheel barrows, rakes, hoes, and various sized hammers and sledges used in mining. In the rear were work clothes, shoes, shirts, bib overalls, hats and snap caps used in the mine. Additionally, there were various work accessories.

In the rear and on the left side was ladies wear. There were few ready-made things but quite a selection of bolted goods for dressmaking and home decoration. Also, there was a large stack of

drawers containing Butterick dress patterns. Farther forward on the left was a sizable chest of drawers containing needles, spools of thread and yarn.

Mr. Rothe was in charge of the ladies goods and would patiently help the young women select dress patterns and fabrics. He was a fine man, and over time purchased considerable land around Pearce. Later on he became owner of the store.

On the left was a door opening to the service courtyard. Along the south side was a long shed containing a box stall and tie area for the friendly delivery horse named “Black Beauty” and space for two spring-delivery wagons, horse feed, a tack room and blacksmith corner. To the north was a storage building. Directly behind the store was an annex area where coal was sold by the gunny sack.

To provide fuel for the growing number of automobiles, on the front porch were aluminum gasoline drums labeled Standard Oil and a hand pump. People used a five-gallon can with a long spout to fill their gas tanks.

In the center of the store was a coal stove which provided heat and served as a social center. Nearby was a mesh-enclosed office on a raised platform which functioned as the local bank. It contained a service counter, a roll-top desk and a safe.

Charles Renaud, the owner of the store at this time, sat near the banking area. He was a friendly, gregarious man who wore a white shirt and smoked a big cigar. He was very generous and provided many a miner with a grub stake, as was the custom in the mining communities.





*Charles Moses Renaud as he appeared in February 1939 at the age of 80. Renaud was born Feb. 4, 1859 in Keokuk, Iowa and arrived in Arizona about 1881. He died March 17, 1940 in San Fernando, CA.*

Jack Murphy, the accountant, was also the teller. He cashed people's checks. Teachers, and others not employed by the mine, used conventional checks and cash. In most cases, the

miners were paid in script, or vouchers, which they used to purchase goods at the store. Thus the Pearce Store was a 'quasi-company store.'"

While the store was a practical enterprise during Pearce's heyday, it is a tribute to the building's appeal that, except for a few brief periods, has been continuously occupied since it was built.

Soto Brothers and Renaud managed the store from 1896 until 1901 when Charles Renaud took it over until 1936 when K. Albert Rothe bought the store. Mr. and Mrs. Rothe died and the store closed in 1960.

In 1961, Ike Cornish, a retired salesman from Chicago, bought the store and reestablished it as a general store; again selling groceries, feed, tools, stocks and other items. Later, he converted part of the store into a railroad museum (the first in the State). The American Association of Railroads immediately accredited it.

The Cornishes sold the store in 1965 to Dr. Raymond N. Dooley, President of Lincoln College in Illinois. Dooley turned the store into a museum while continuing to sell modern merchandise needed by the ranchers and a growing retirement community. The store had become a monument to the past.

The next owners were John and Ginger Thurman from Lake Buff, Illinois, who bought the store in 1969 and remodeled the interior to look more like a 1900s store. John Thurman passed away in 1978. Ginger later married Dave (Fred) Davison who made several changes on the site. Following a long illness, Davison passed away. Ginger was again responsible for the building.

For a few years the store was closed; but in 1997, Ginger sold the store to Michael and Patricia Burris.

Rehabilitation efforts have been underway since the purchase. Under the auspices of CCHS, the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office has granted monies for the restoration of the exterior portion of the building. Doors and windows are in the process of being hand stripped, patched and painted. The



facade, including the finials, roof and signs are being repaired. Old rotted wood is being replaced with new. Metal is being patched and the building is showing a new, brighter face.

Inside renovations include extensive plumbing and electrical work. "When we assumed the property, an electrical cord ran from the well through the blacksmith shop, across the yard, through a broken window into the Old Store, and up to the front of the building into the fuse box," says Patricia Burris, the present owner. "We started with upgrading that and when SSVEC came out to switch the ownership service they wouldn't turn it on until an exterior switch was put up, so that was next. We have since continued to upgrade."

The work has been eventful. While tracing wiring in the kitchen area of the Old Store, Simon Burris discovered a cellar that had been covered since Charles Renaud owned the building. Items belonging to Mr. Renaud were sealed in the cellar.

Large and small treasures – depicting eras of history of the building and of the surrounding community – have been discovered in the outbuildings, under floors, in trash areas and on the shelves of the Old Store. These items, along with others collected, are assembled for display on the shelves inside the building for visitors to enjoy.

Each year, for the past two years, the Old Pearce Mercantile celebrates the commencement of the holiday season—as well as the anniversary of the present ownership—with a festival.

Plans are to open (with regular business hours) the Old Pearce Mercantile in 2003, not only as a museum, but also a retail store including an old-time candy counter and "Arizona" groceries. Visitors are regularly found in front of the building in awe that this unique historical structure still stands in a remote area as a monument to the struggle of the Arizona settler.

Since the National Register Nomination for the Pearce Store, approved in 1977, did not address directly the historical and architectural importance of the store, it is appropriate for us to

do so now. This brief analysis will focus on Arizona, but the situation is similar in the other western states where so many early buildings are disappearing.

Most ghost towns contain few buildings and those that remain are in marginal condition at best. There are some old commercial buildings, but most are modest in concept. None has a grand, ornamented facade like the Pearce Store. There are few surviving adobe buildings and it has been said that the Pearce Store is the largest adobe structure in Arizona (other than churches).

In some of the larger historic towns like Bisbee, Tombstone and Florence, there are some handsome commercial buildings, but many of these date from an earlier period. Others have been remodeled to keep up with the times. The Pearce General Store is a unique historic survivor. It is an original ghost town commercial building that has changed little since it was built. It was unusually well constructed for a building in a mining town.

What inspired the design of this imposing general store? As previously stated, the Soto Brothers and Renaud wished to build an important, substantial building. They shared the vision of many of the founders of Pearce that their new town should be the equal of Tombstone.

Originally, the Pearce Store had an imposing adobe false front. But soon a stamped metal surface was added. Since the Soto Brothers came from Tombstone, it is not unreasonable to suppose that they might have been inspired by a building there to upgrade their store. It so happens that on Allen Street just southeast of 4<sup>th</sup> Street, there was a store front with an entablature which looked strikingly like the cornice of the Pearce store, complete with projecting side brackets and finials. (There appears to be another similar facade down the street).

Likewise, the Arcade Lodging House had a similar entablature with finials as well as stamped metal facades like the Pearce Store front above the porch. Unfortunately, neither facade in Tombstone exists today. In the Pearce General Store,



these design features were combined in a bolder way to grace the high, breathtaking false front we see today.

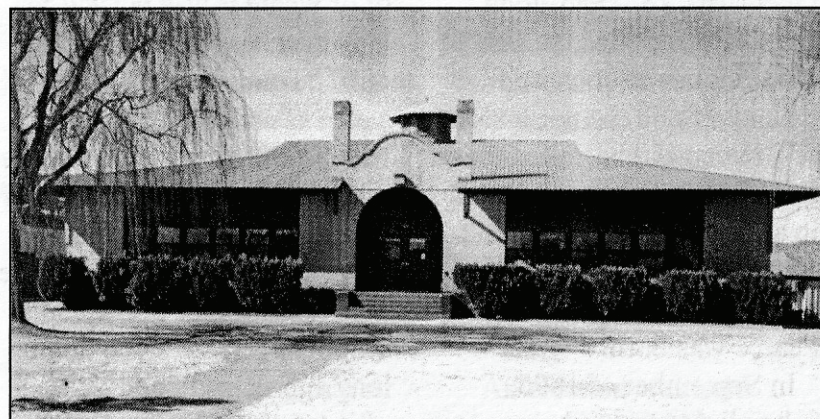
Some important buildings in Tombstone, like the City Hall and the Bird Cage Theater, had cased, arched door and window openings and partly glazed panel doors with fixed panels. Similar design elements appear in the Pearce Store. Thus, this later building in Pearce modified and synthesized some materials and design ideas that were used earlier in Tombstone.

The Italianate style was dominant in the expanding towns and cities of the Midwest between 1850 and 1880. Much of the architecture in Tombstone (incorporated in 1881) is Italianate. The detailing of the windows and doors and the use of finials and a spire in the Pearce Store reflects an Italianate influence.

Gable front commercial buildings with parapet, or false front facades, were a common feature of pioneer western main streets. These false fronts made a modest building seem more substantial and they provided a good background for signs. They also helped main street seem more urban and enclosed, possibly more protected, since these small towns were outposts in a vast wilderness. False fronts usually were simply constructed and functional. Such fronts are found in Tombstone, but the arcaded sidewalks obscure them.

There were a few false fronts in Pearce although the town never developed the urban density of Tombstone and didn't create a similar feeling of enclosure. Thus, the grand, ornamental parapet of the Pearce Store was a stunning and isolated example. The original false front was built in the Mission Style. A few Mission Revival buildings were constructed in Arizona during the 1890s.

The Old Pearce Store is a very unique building, both historically and architecturally. It reveals a fascinating, meaningful and almost forgotten way of life. It is a significant example of a once common building type. Its preservation and protection takes on a special importance. Fortunately, Patricia and Michael Burris appreciate the historical significance of this grand old building.



*The main building of Pearce School as it appears today.*

## *A Brief History of Pearce School*

by Jim Burnett

**Author's Note:** In the tenth year of the 20th Century, Pearce Grammar School, District 22, was 13 years old, had three teachers, roughly 150 pupils, and a budget of a few thousand dollars. The school is now 105 years old, has 125 pupils, three busses, a six building campus, eight teachers and a budget of just over \$1,000,000.

In preparing this history, I have leaned heavily on *The Cochise County Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 26, #1, Spring, 1996, and on material found among "The

Monmonier Papers," in "Special Collections," at the U of A Library. Interviews with people familiar with Pearce have been helpful, as well as news items in ancient copies of "The Tombstone Prospector" and "The Sulphur Valley News." The County School superintendent's office also has some records of the early years of Pearce Schools.

Lastly, I have relied on my own memories going back to 1924 when I was enrolled in the first grade of said school, and all the years since.

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February 18, 1895, John James Pearce filed the first of many claims to soon be filed on and around the north slope of what would be called the Pearce Hill. People swarmed in and squatted on the flat ground to the north and west of the hill, and the town of Pearce was born.

In September of 1896, subscriptions were being taken to build a school and hire a teacher. Donations ran from one dollar, lots of them, to over fifty dollars by businesses. Lest we disparage these one-dollar contributions, let us remember, one dollar was a full day's wage in that distant day.

By September 1897 the building was completed, and school opened with 50 pupils and one teacher, Miss Ollie Woodward. The lady was paid \$65.00 per month.

The building was put up by Mr. John Gates and cost between four and five hundred dollars. Presumably the schoolhouse was built near the northwest corner of what today is the school ground, though I have found no mention of what it was built

of or where it was put. However, the September 21, 1897 "Tombstone Prospector" states a "crew of 12 men are sinking a shaft just back of the school house." In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, there was a large shaft just outside of the northwest corner of the schoolyard. That shaft was long ago filled in and no trace of it remains, but it was there.

Minutes of School Board meetings in 1898 and 1899 authorized money for repairs to the roof and adobe walls of the building, and pretty well established that it was an adobe building.

However, the useful life of that first schoolhouse was short. The minutes of the August 25, 1901, meeting of the School Board records a formal thanks to the Commonwealth Milling and Mining Company for the schoolhouse they built and donated to the District. It also authorizes the order of desks for the new building. The Board also authorized the sale of the old building to B.T. Pruitt for \$150.00.

Where that new building was placed, how large it was,

or what it was made of remains a mystery, sort of. I have found no mention of that building, other than the August 15, 1901, board meeting minutes. I have concluded it must have been the large frame building, half church and half school that stood just south of the big square brick building that is the center of Pearce School today.

Information on Pearce School from 1900 to 1910 is sketchy, but apparently the student body grew to 145 pupils and three rooms and presumably three teachers.

Interesting item "In 1913 the name of Miss Nettie Gallagher, comely daughter of the village blacksmith appears on the roll of teachers for the first time. Miss Nettie was destined to slip in and out of the system 'til about the mid-century mark. After retiring from teaching at Pearce she went to a Mormon settlement in Mexico and continued to teach for a number of years. Nettie Gallagher Harper is honored by the Pearce School auditorium that bears her name."

The Board of Trustees of the Pearce School District #22 purchased from the town site of Pearce lots 1-12 and 31-42 of block 17 on January 8, 1912. The price was \$70.00. This was presumably to provide additional room for the contemplated new school building.

An election was held November 22, 1913, to bond the district for \$10,000.00 to build a four-room schoolhouse. The measure carried by a vote of 13 for and none against. The small vote is surprising.

May 30, 1914, a contract was let to J.M. Sparks to build a four-room high school to be completed in three months. The price for cream-pressed brick construction was \$8,499.00. The resultant building was nearly square with 80 feet north to south and 62 feet east to west. A central hall ran through the building east to west with two rooms to the north and two to the south. Each room had a cloak closet and a big coal-burning stove in one corner, and a small office between the two rooms. Two brick outhouses to the





*First Pearce School bus.*

west of the building and a frame coal shed between, completed the project.

On February 19, 1915, an election was called to decide if the school should sell lots 1-12 and 31-42, block 17, to the Commonwealth Mining Company. The consideration was a 99-year lease on the ground now occupied by the school buildings. The measure carried five votes for and none against, again a small turn out.

Somehow, someone built the school on land not owned by the district and the school to this day is on leased land. The lease runs out at the end of 2013, which isn't very far away.

Through the years from

1910 to 1920, the enrollment held fairly steady, for while the mining continued to decline and the population of the town continued to dwindle, more people settled in the surrounding area and their children attended the school in Pearce.

During 1920 a Union High School District consisting of Pearce, Ash Creek, and Whitewater, Webb and Texas (the Elfrida area) was formed. In September 1920 the Pearce Union High School with 50 pupils and three teachers opened for business. The high school occupied the north half (two rooms and an office) of the main building. They also used a little adobe building a

couple of hundred yards to the north of the school as the girls' shower and commercial studies room. A small frame house on the southeast corner of the school grounds became a chemistry lab and boys' shower. The grammar school occupied the south half of the main building and the school half of the previously mentioned building donated by the Commonwealth Mining Company.

The two schools retained their separate identities, each having its own board of trustees and staff, but transportation was shared. Transportation was a big item as Pearce Union High School District was a far-flung, sparsely populated, poverty-stricken district. During the '30s and '40s the district did not have an operating mine, a foot of railroad, a gas line, or a going business that could be taxed, only little farms and ranch land. Students were gathered up from the Stronghold on the west, to lower Turkey Creek on the east, Servoss on the north to Courtland and Kelton, to Webb and Elfrida on the

south.

Early day busses were mostly family cars: Dodge and Buick, Ford and Chevrolet, usually driven by the oldest pupil in the family. In the 1930s, the most prestigious of them was a Pearce Arrow, owned by John Gradall of the Kansas Settlement. In the late '20s, Mrs. Martin Williams hauled Elfrida area pupils in a sort of express wagon, one with a solid roof and sides of heavy metal mesh. About 1930 the district purchased a real yellow school bus and hired Dick Olson to drive it. Mr. Olson was a strict disciplinarian, always safe, and was always on time. Slightly feared and highly respected by parents and pupils alike, Dick Olson became a living legend. I believe he continued to drive the Elfrida bus until the high school moved south.

The basic structure of a teaching principal and two teachers for the grade school and a teaching principal and two teachers for the high school continued from 1920 to the early 1940s when the high school was moved to the



Elfrida area, because that is where most of the high school pupils were.

The schoolyard was fenced in 1927 or maybe 1928 and the town donkeys no longer loitered on the school grounds.

In 1932 the Southern Pacific took up their track from Cochise to Pearce and the pumping station and also the school at Servoss was abandoned. The school building was hauled to Pearce and placed just west of the half-school, half-church building, which was just south of the main building. It became the commercial building for the high school.

Pearce had been so depressed for so long the great depression didn't make much difference, except for one thing. Cochise County residents couldn't pay their taxes so the county couldn't pay the teachers. The county issued warrants to be paid if the county ever got any money. Some banks and some individuals cashed them, but at a discount. This worked a hardship on the school staff and by extension, the whole community.

On the positive side, in 1933, shortly after Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated, the W.P.A. came to town and with it came a little money, which spread around quickly. The big project for Pearce was to be a gymnasium for the school. One crew began hauling wagon loads of adobe bricks salvaged from old abandoned walls downtown, to the construction site at the southwest corner of the schoolyard. Another crew poured a concrete slab, which was to be the floor of the gymnasium, but somehow the project became bogged down. Through the years, the piles of adobe bricks slowly melted down, but the slab became a combination basketball court, tennis court and skating rink, which were enjoyed by many kids for many years.

As previously noted, the high school was moved south in the early '40s and the student body of the grade school continued to shrink, first to two teachers, then to one. Through the '50s it struggled along as a one-teacher school, but in 1959, there were only five pupils left

and the county school superintendent was ready to close Pearce Grammar School. John and Mary Magoffin, who lived between Cochise Stronghold and Dragoon, had two children who had been attending school at Cochise. They transferred to Pearce and the school was saved for another year.

Sunsites and adjacent areas were beginning to roll, and the next year 1960, the school had 41 pupils and two teachers. Pearce School had narrowly escaped the long slow slide into oblivion. In 1965 there were 77 pupils, and by 1966, four teachers taught 82 students. By 1975 there were five teachers and 154 students. Pearce was really on a roll.

When the high school left, the grade school suddenly had access to extra classrooms. The shrinking student body and shrinking budget excluded any improvements other than basic maintenance, but there was one exception. About 1960, the plumbing in the old schoolhouse was upgraded and the old brick privies that had served unnumbered students for half a century

disappeared forever.

The year 1975 ushered in a decade of building to meet the needs of the expanding student body and to meet the requirement of modernizing education. The Nettie Harper auditorium went up, followed by the Jack Giles gymnasium in 1978. Additional classrooms, a teacher's lounge and a band room were added. In 1987, the administration building went up just east of the gymnasium.

This completed the school as it is today, which seems to be adequate for the current student body, K through 8, as the professionals say.

Today (2003), 125 pupils ride to Pearce Grammar School in three big yellow busses where eight teachers, helped by four teachers' aides teach them. This year's budget is just a tad over one million dollars – quite a jump from the little school of a century ago.

Editor's Note: Jim Burnett is a noted Cochise County author. His address is 102 Mountain View, Bisbee, AZ 85603. Phone: 520-432-7161.



# The Old Timers Rendezvous

*(Formerly, The Old Timers of the '40s)*

by Mary Magoffin

Although the High School has been gone from Pearce since 1945, fond memories of it are revived once a year, when former students gather at the Pearce Grammar School to reminisce, to renew old friendships and to make new friends.

"The Old Timers of the '40s" was the brain child of Tiny Eicks Dulin and her sister, Frankie Eicks Sutherland. On January 13, 1990, they threw a little party for about twenty of the friends they had chummed around with during WW II. That day they adopted the name and agreed that the get-together should become an annual event, and must include more of their old friends.

From that modest beginning, the Fourteenth Annual Reunion will be held on April

12, 2003, at the Pearce Grammar School Gym. Between 125 and 150 people are expected to attend. Each year, toward the end of January, a notice is sent out which includes a mailing list. Thirty-five letters were sent in 1991, and during 2003 over 150 notices were mailed. Postage and printing in 1991 came to \$30. This year the stamps alone came to over \$50.

Early on it was determined that the only way to be sure of enough food was to have a potluck lunch. Through the years this has proven to be completely satisfactory.

The second reunion was held at Cochise College with Douglas and Doris Dees helping Frankie and Tiny with the arrangements. Doris set up the format which we still use; a cover letter in the form of a memo, plus the mailing list.

George and Evelyn Nelson hosted the third reunion, which was held at the Benson Bowling Alley. Around fifty enthusiastic people attended.

Then, it was back to the Cochise College Student Union for the next four years, but we were about to outgrow

the facilities. Someone suggested that we come to the old stompin' grounds, Pearce, for the 1997 gathering. This proved to be so successful that we have continued to meet here with the exception of the year 2000. That was when we went down to the



*Participants at the 2000 reunion included: Kneeling, front row, left to right: Burl Sherman, Earline Jean Keegan, Franklin Shelton, Don Burnett, Ed Collett, Della Jean Western, Irma Dunn Tanner, Leona Gillespie Durham, Cecile Warburton Mcpherson, Mary Burnett Magoffin, Nathalie Thompson McDonald, Fred Tanner, Myron Ingle. Back row: Louise Hudspeth, Sam Thompson, Virgil Thompson, Lovinnie Naegle Cody, Clyde Thompson, John Thompson, Jim Burnett, Lucille Thompson Collett, Thelma Higgins O'Connell, Lavine Thompson Fenn, Betty Hudson Kendall Eckret, Foncie Gillespie Dees, Kenneth Smith, Floyd Sherman and Michael Maffeo.*



Valley Union High School at Elfrida, to help them celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the transplant of the High School.

The "Rendezvous" is not limited to Pearce Alumni, by any means. It is for anyone who has a soft spot in his (or her) heart for Pearce or the Valley. We especially encourage the "Old Timers" children to join us.

In 200, one of the most heart-warming events occurred when FIVE members of the graduating class of 1936 met, after sixty-four years! Several of them had not seen each other since graduation night. It was very special.

The oldest Pearce alumnus is Mable Magill Brown, who graduated in 1932. She has lived in the Elfrida area most of her life, and is still sharp and smart-looking at the age of ninety-two. Mable still writes articles for the newspaper and the historical society.

One of the teachers from the late '30s, Mike Maffeo, has attended most of the reunions. We all remember him as such a dashing, handsome young man. He turned into a

handsome, gracious elderly gentleman, a real asset to the group. Sorry to say, but he passed away in 2002.

As cousins Don Burnett and Mary Burnett Magoffin live near Pearce, they have fallen heir to making the arrangements for the reunions, with help from Jim Burnett. The biggest difficulty is keeping the addresses up to date. Old friends come from far and wide. Possibly the farthest of all was Jimmy Dale Tanner, who came all the way from Alaska one year. Many other states are represented as well, i.e., Louisiana, New Mexico, Colorado, Nebraska, California, Idaho, Arkansas, Washington and Texas.

The reunion is not advertised except for word of mouth and the notices. It's always exciting to see who comes, and to hear about their adventures along life's journey.

All of us who attended school at Pearce in "the good old days" marvel at today's beautiful campus. Where we had rocks and bare ground, now there are trees and grass. The credit goes to Ralph



*At the 2000 reunion were members of the 1936 high school graduating class: Paul Watts, Jim Burnett, Frances Blanke Kelly, Bob McKinney and Bob Burnett. Bob and Jim Burnett, Bob McKinney and Frances Blanke had graduated from the Pearce Grammar School also.*

Cartmell, son of Ralph Cartmell (remember Bud and Babe?) who takes a lot of pride in keeping everything ship-shape. The grand old original building looks even better than it did when we went to school there.

In 2002 the name, "The Old Timers of the '40s" was changed to "Old Timers Rendezvous." After lunch there is a brief business meeting, mainly to determine a satisfactory date for the next reunion. Formal programs are not necessary as the business

of the day is to touch base with as many old friends as possible. Some of the folks claim that the reunion is the highlight of their year. Pretty heady stuff for the ones who put it on!

There is no charge, but there is a donation jar handy. Somehow, there always is enough money to cover expenses, which are modest for this no-frills party.

The one concession to formality is name tags, a real necessity as most of us don't recall names as readily as we

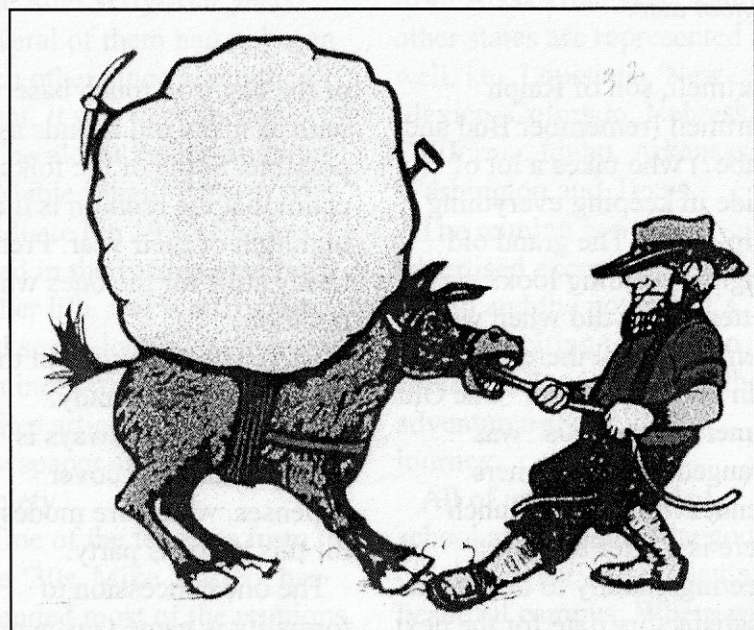


used to. (An understatement!) And, strange as it may seem, some of us HAVE changed a bit through the years!!

Our sincere hope is that the reunion will continue for many years, and we think this is possible, as several of the next generation have been helping. To name them: Beverly Woods and Susie Husband, Jim Burnett's daughters; Mary Burnett, Lea Burnett's daughter; and Penny

Skaggs and Willie Hirshinger, Don Burnett's daughters. Thanks a heap, girls!

We are all grateful to Tiny Dulin, Frankie Sutherland, and Doug and Doris Dees for their foresight in getting the reunions started. You did a good day's work back there on January 13, 1990! Just imagine how many people your idea has made happy through the years!



# Cornishman Discovers Gold

*(The following article was first published in "Ghost Town Trail News," a Pearce Arizona publication by Patty Burris that appeared in the March 2003 issue.)*

.....Following is information regarding John Pearce, his genealogy and how it affects our area to this day:

Many years ago in the British Isles, there was a family known as Pearce and a variety of other persons who eventually became part of the Pearce family, some by birth and some by choice. As best that can be determined, the family has its most recent roots in Cornwall Redruth, England. The information is considered to be fairly reliable and accurate, but due to the passage of time senior

members of the family, some may be inaccurate.

Marsha and I made a trip to Tucson to see what we could find and visit Ruth Pearce, who is now 91 years of age and in failing health. While there, I asked what her father's name was and she replied that she couldn't remember. But in our trip to the City Library, we looked at all the books that dealt with the City of Pearce and found some conflicting information. Some of the books said that "Jimmy" Pearce found the mine and some "Johnny" Pearce. When we mentioned this to Ruth, she replied very clearly and firmly that it was "Johnny." This is also the name that was given by my mother many years ago.

In a newspaper article dated November 9, 1957, there is an article about Ruth leaving her home at 65 E. Alameda Street, Tucson, where she and her brother were born and her father built. He purchased the land in 1896 and came to Tucson to attend the





*Ruth Pearce, daughter of John Pearce. Photo courtesy of Ghost Town Trail News*

University of Arizona. Prior to that time, he was living in Tombstone, Arizona. In the article, he is mentioned as William Pearce, a miner and cattleman who had lived in Tombstone in 1882. He married Phoebe May Jones in 1905. They had two children: William, who was born in 1906 and Ruth, who was born two years later.

The Pearce Mine was founded in 1895 and was located four miles from the Pearce Ranch at the foot of the Dragoon Mountains. The mine was named "The Commonwealth" by Johnny Pearce. He also had two other mines: the "Horn Spoon" and the "Blue Bell". Johnny or Jimmy was born in England on July 23, 1844 to Elizabeth (Auther) and Thomas Pearce. In 1864 he married Maria Curnow. He came to the U.S. in 1868 and spent two years in the east before going west to Colorado in 1870. Three years later he went to Idaho. In 1876, he went to Grass Valley, then in 1880 to Montana, Nevada and finally settled in Arizona.



*John Pearce*



# Guardians of History



*Bill Hudspeth*

Bill Hudspeth's father, Lee, was a well-known member of the southern Arizona ranching community. Around 1910 he owned a ranch and ran cattle in Guadalupe Canyon, which later became Davis McDonald's ranch. After he left Guadalupe Canyon, Lee worked on a number of ranches in Mexico, including Marion Williams' Santa Rosa Ranch and the one owned by the Moctezuma Copper

Company, near Nacozari, where Bill was born in 1922. Bill can't actually remember it, but was told that the ranch was so isolated that Lee had to bring the provisions in on a pack mule.

When Bill was just a little shaver, Lee took a job with the Green Cattle Company RO Ranch at Palominas. The counterpart Mexican ranch, the ORO, would send steers, a thousand head at a time, to the



RO Palominas Ranch. At the border crossing, the animals were run through a dipping vat where they jumped in on the Mexico side and climbed out in the U.S.A. The Palominas Ranch was a holding area where the cattle would rest up before being sent to a feed lot in California.

Bill started to school in Cananea, learning his lessons in Spanish for the first and second grade. From the third grade through the sixth he attended school in Palominas, and during those years he helped his dad on the ranch. His favorite teacher was Miss Rose Clinton, later Mrs. Rose Smith, who was the daughter of homesteaders. Bill recalls that the cowboys would drive huge herds of cattle right by the schoolhouse on their way to the corrals at Hereford.

In 1936, Lee retired and moved to Douglas where Bill continued his education, but he joined the Marines before graduating from High School. In the Marines he was trained to be an airplane mechanic and went to the Solomon Islands until the war ended.

In 1943 he married Louise

Edmonds and they had two sons, Joe and William.

After the war Bill got a job at the Junction Mine in Bisbee where he was a Boiler Maker's helper. He went to work at the Douglas Fire Department in 1950 where he worked for 34 years, the last nine of them as Fire Chief. His proudest accomplishment was getting an ambulance at the fire station. Today there are three fully-equipped ambulances ready for any emergency.

Many times on his days off, Bill would help ranchers around Douglas, keeping his hand in the skills he had learned as a youngster.

Meanwhile, Louise's sister, Theodore, had married Fred Price, the youngest son of "Grandma" Price, one of the first homesteaders at Turkey Creek. After Fred died, Theodore married Charlie Smith, and if they needed help, Bill and Louise were always available. When Theodore passed away in 1970 she left the ranch to Bill and Louise, where they lived part time. At the present, Bill's son, Joe, a retired Naval Lt.

Commander, and his wife, Fidela, live on the ranch. As of this writing, due to the drought, there are just a few head of cattle left.

Bill has always been interested in local history and

is a long-time member of CCHS. He served as vice-president under Page Bakarich, becoming president when Page died.

CCHS is proud to honor Bill as a Guardian of History.



*Bonnie Jennings Matney*

Bonnie Jennings was born in Pearce, Arizona, on August 12, 1916, to Virgil and Myra Gallagher Matney. Her family came to Pearce on the train when she was twelve years old. Her parents (Bonnie's grandparents) Fulton Joseph and Elmira Kitterman Gallagher had invested their money in the old Chinese restaurant as a residence. The Chinese had moved their business further up Main Street. The Gallaghers



soon discovered that their building came complete with an opium den in the basement. Now, 91 years later, Bonnie lives in the same house.

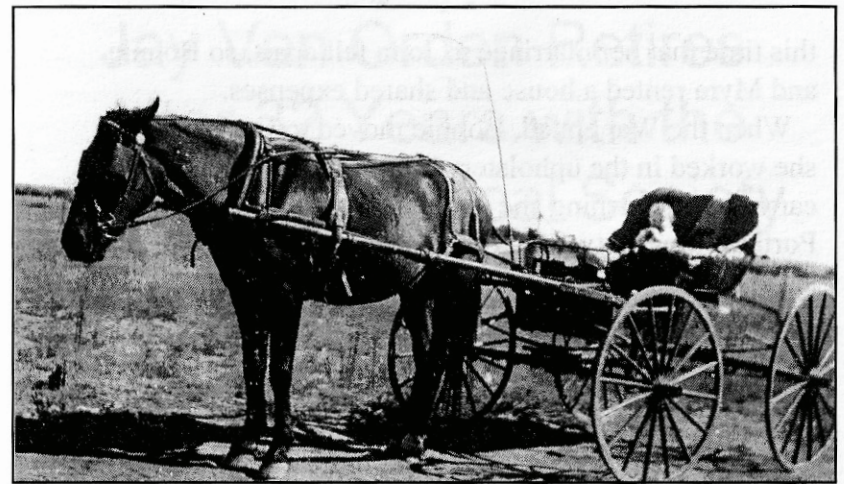
Mr. Gallagher was a blacksmith and his smithy was north of the Soto Brothers and Renaud Store (the OLD STORE today). When Myra arrived in 1912, Pearce was still a respectable-sized town with quite a number of businesses and residents. The Matney's were residents of Pearce at that time.

Bonnie's father, Virgil Matney, drove a delivery wagon for the store, and his father worked in the store which had everything in stock that a person could possibly want. The Matney's home was about three miles west of Pearce, up toward the mountains. Bonnie's older sister, Athalie, was a year older than Bonnie, and her little brother, Fritz, who was four years younger.

Two memories stand out clearly from Bonnie's early childhood at Pearce. A little girl had died and the family had peacocks, possibly just one peacock. Bonnie remembers hearing the peacock wailing and crying like its heart was broken.

Her other memory was when the gypsies came to town. All the little children ran and hid as they'd been told that the gypsies stole children. A bear was plodding along with them. Bonnie doesn't know if it danced or did any tricks, as she didn't venture out of the house while the gypsies were there.

The year that Bonnie was six, her father went to California to hunt for work and forgot to come home. When Myra realized that she was on her own, she moved to Bisbee where she found employment as a maid in one of the big houses in Warren. She had to leave the two girls in the park while she worked, so they became self-reliant and independent at an early age.



*Bonnie Jennings at one year.*

Myra met and married a lawyer, Starr K. Williams, who proved to be a wonderful husband and a loving stepfather to the children who dearly loved him. He passed away in January 1947.

In grammar school, Bonnie caught up with Athalie in the fifth grade. They attended the sixth grade together; both skipped the seventh grade and went right into the eighth grade. They graduated together from Bisbee High School in 1933.

After graduation, Bonnie thought job opportunities would be better in California, so she went to stay with her long-lost father and his new wife. Bonnie's intention was to become a telephone operator, but instead she took a job as a live-in nanny. After a couple of years she married John Burnett, and they had two sons, Travis and Donald.

During World War II Bonnie worked in a defense factory in West Hollywood, California, where they fabricated parts for airplanes, and she became an inspector. All the workers realized the importance of every single part they produced, knowing that if it was shoddy it might cost a plane or a pilot. It was during



this time that her marriage to John fell apart, so Bonnie and Myra rented a house and shared expenses.

When the War ended, Bonnie moved to Oregon where she worked in the upholstery business and also with canvas. One awning she made for a sidewalk canopy in Portland was sixty-five feet long and ten feet wide! She also made a few sails for sailboats. When she was very young, her mother taught her how to sew, a skill she has used and enjoyed all her life. She met and married Thatcher Warren Jennings in Portland, which she says was a wonderful blessing to her.

Bonnie didn't return to Pearce very often during this period of her life. In early November 1945 Grandmother Gallagher died and Bonnie's Aunt Nettie Harper came from California to live in the Gallagher house. Nettie taught at Pearce Grammar School until she retired, and then she went to Mexico where she continued to teach for several years. Around 1978 Nettie died and Bonnie's mother, Myra, came to Pearce to live. Her health was poor, so Bonnie and her husband, Thatcher Warren Jennings, came from Oregon to help Myra. Thatcher died in 1986 and Myra passed away in 1983.

Now Bonnie's son, Travis, and his wife, Deanne, live in the old Gallagher home with Bonnie. The house is charming, inside and out. It shows that people who have lived in it have loved it and have cared for it all through the years.

Bonnie, you are truly a Guardian of History!! Pearce history, that is!

## Jay Van Orden Retires After 32 Years with the Arizona Historical Society

by Anne I. Woosley, Ph. D.

*Reprint from the Arizona  
Historical Society Newsletter.*

The Arizona Historical Society marks a milestone with Jay Van Orden's retirement after 32 years of dedicated service. Under Jay's leadership, outreach to history advocates, both individual and community, flourished. It seemed scarcely believable that he actually was retiring until, on his last day, Jay appeared in a flamingo shirt, walking shorts and knee socks, topped with pith helmet – apparently appropriate attire when headed for the tropical climes. While we have already expressed on several occasions our appreciation for his good work on behalf of AHS, it is proper to make note of our thanks here so that we can share it with our membership.

We are pleased that Jim Turner will take on many of Jay's service responsibilities.

~ ~ ~

We at CCHS appreciate the help and advice we have received from Jay over the years. He has been a good friend and has attended many of our annual meetings.

We are including a short biography of how he became involved with AHS, and the poem "Volunteers" which was written by Jay's Mother and read by him at the annual meeting last year. We think it is appropriate to print it here and thank Jay for sharing it with us.

by Jay Van Orden

The pictures of mom, Barbara Soverel VanOrden, and I represent the life she gave me and the way of life I pursued. Born in Montclair, New Jersey, in 1944, and



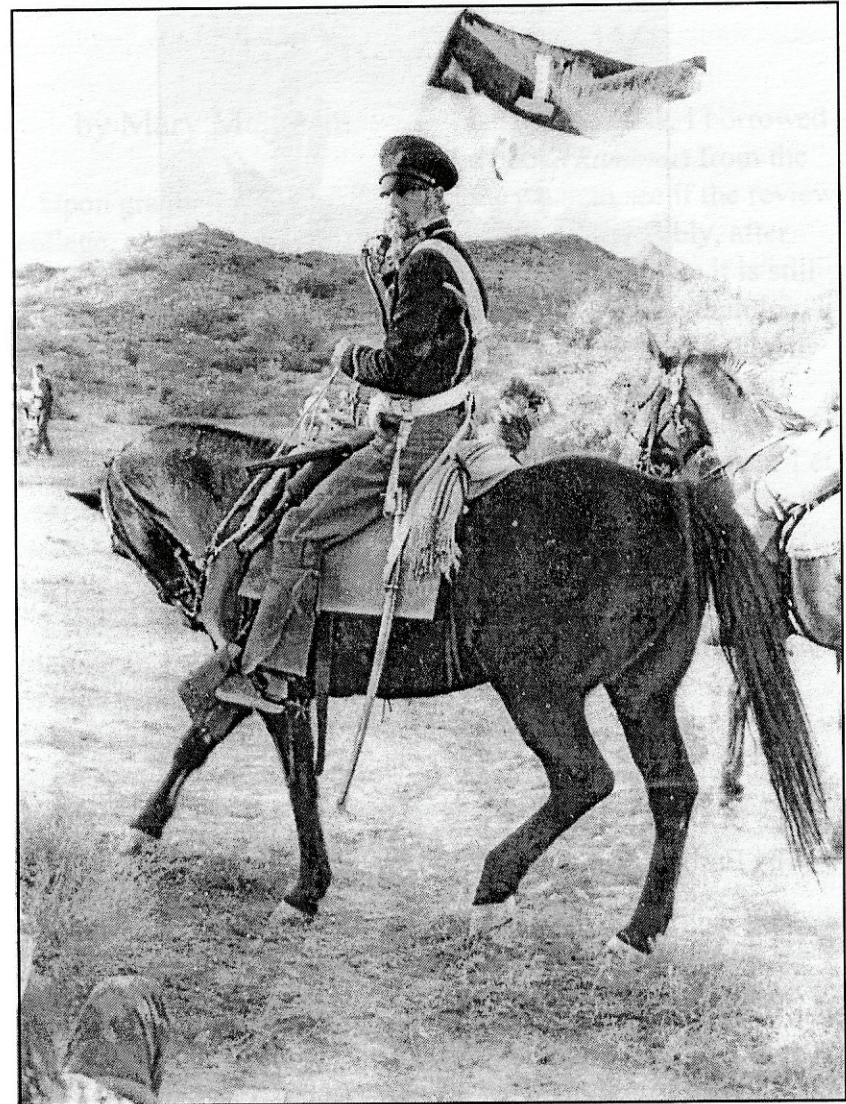
raised in the San Fernando Valley in L.A., with all that 50's California stuff, I was bound to be a city boy for the remainder..., but Bo's (mom's preferred name) brother, Malcolm, got me interested in the families Revolutionary and Civil War ancestral histories through family heirlooms and guns. Mom always made time to volunteer for the L.A. major and council women's offices, the college, her sorority, and other good causes. She obtained the "C" tennis team championship for all of L.A., all without neglecting her five children. Following her lead and deeds I picked up a tennis racket, and her life long love of horses had the effect of not only keeping myself shod but also of keeping shoes on my horses for almost 40 years.

Though I never got rid of all that "city boy" stuff, I worked in a gun shop for five years while struggling through college (B.A. in geography, minor in history). My paycheck mostly was consumed by Civil War guns. A large chunk of it went to a bronze breech loading field cannon! Unbeknownst to me

all the pillars of my "adult" life were in hand. I became interested in western living history via horses, of course, and after a few years in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox Research Library; it was "Hello Dolly... Good bye Fox" when the studio shut down.

In 1970 I picked up stakes and landed in Tucson. Since I was the only "cavalry man" with a cannon at the Annual Fort Lowell Days which portray the Geronimo Wars, I met lots of people. One person, Tom Peterson, invited me to have beers with the local cavalry group. I said, "I can't leave my cannon alone out here". He said that we'd put it in the museum where he worked. I did and one thing led to another...so here I am after 32 years of working for the AHS retiring.

The picture of "Bo" is of her riding Jiggs Julie Ann, my Missouri Fox Trotter, despite the loss of her leg below the knee; Mom didn't let anything stop her. Yes, I guess I am a "Momma's Boy" and proud of it.



*Jay Van Orden, Civil War re-enactment*





Barbara Van Orden

## Volunteer

by Barbara Van Orden  
December 1996

The word "volunteer"  
Means many things,  
But one fact is dominant  
The fulfillment it brings.

Of knowing you're helping  
People – or a cause,  
Of making things better  
And all because –

You took the time,  
Effort and thought.  
You worked for others  
Their happiness you brought –

Of course, there are times  
When you just want to sit  
But you do feel better  
Helping a lot or a bit –

Our country was built  
By each helping the other,  
Husband and wife,  
Sister and brother.

# Book Review

by Mary Magoffin

Upon graduating from college, my Mother, Grace Nebold (Burnett) took her first teaching job at the brand new Divernon Township High School in Divernon, Illinois. While idly thumbing through the year book she had for that year, 1914, a review of the book "*Ramona*" caught my attention.

I was very much impressed to think that a person just out of high school could write such an intelligent report. The suggestion was made that CCHS might use it for one of our Book Reviews. Certainly it would qualify from the historical standpoint.

Coincidentally, about the same time my niece, Mary Burnett, located an article in a True West magazine about a fellow who claimed that the book "*Ramona*" had ruined his life. Our plan is to print that article as a sequel to this one, and it will be in the Fall/Winter issue of the CCHS Journal.

Out of curiosity, I borrowed the book (*Ramona*) from the library just to see if the review was valid. Incredibly, after more than 100 years it is still spellbinding. In my opinion, it ranks right along with Uncle Tom's Cabin and Blood Brother as a commentary on man's inhumanity to man. Let us hope that *Ramona* helped the plight of the California Indians, as well as others.

Following is the book review as written by Lorena Gordon in 1914.

## RAMONA

by Lorena Gordon, post graduate

Helen Hunt Jackson was born in 1831 at Amherst, Massachusetts. Her education consisted of the usual inefficient courses prescribed for girls of her time. At the age of 21, she married Captain Edward Hunt of the United States Army, and from this time she traveled extensively.



Quite naturally her mind was ripened by these experiences. Her life in the west and her consequent contact with the Indian, revealed to her the injustice being shown to him, and to remedy this evil she fought with all the strength of her ardent nature. As a result of this association with the red man she has given us *Ramona*, her most popular story. *Ramona*, with its underlying appeal for justice, is based on the story of a perfect love—not one which alters when it altercation finds or sorrows follow, but which remains unchangeable through all vicissitudes.

Ramona Ortega, the adopted daughter of Senora Ortega, had been given to the care and protection of Senora Moreno, upon the Senora Ortega's death. But to the world at large, Ramona was a mystery. The story of Ramona the Senora Moreno never told, and no one ever asked a prying question of the Senora. All loved Ramona except the Senora, and her hatred of her had been inspired by the knowledge that the child was of Indian blood. While the

Senora Moreno was yet a mere child, her older sister, Ramona, was promised in marriage to Angus Phail, who devotedly loved her. But notwithstanding this fact she married Senor Ortega, and from that day Angus sank lower and lower, till one of the frequent sights was Angus Phail reeling about drunken and profane. Yet, when after several years he brought his little child, his by an Indian woman, to the Senora Ortega, and asked her to care for the little Ramona, for such he had her christened, the Senora took the child and cared for it as her own. The little Ramona soon became a joy in the household and likewise became more beautiful every day. But soon the Senora died and Ramona came to live with her sister, Senora Moreno, as was the dying request of the devoted foster mother.

Ramona was ever bright and cheerful. Father Salvierderra had told her that to be unhappy was a sin, and so, although the Senora Moreno had no love for her, the little face never reflected its

bitterness. Felipe, son of the Senora, upon whom her inmost soul centered, alone understood Ramona and loved her deeply. But this his mother did not know.

Ramona was 18 years old when the sheep shearers came to the Moreno rancho. At the head of this Indian band was Alessandro, a stalwart, handsome and well educated Indian, whose father was the ruler of the surrounding Indian tribes. Unconsciously, the feeling of love took possession of Ramona and Alessandro, although neither would have known its significance by this term. The keen eyes of Felipe, as well as those of the Senora, soon discovered this feeling. Although the latter was greatly enraged, it was now too late. Each loved the other too passionately to allow such objections to separate them. When the Senora realized this, she told Ramona the story of her birth, and also showed her many valuable jewels which would be hers, if she married worthily. But Alessandro she did not consider worthy, and by no means would she

consent to allow them to be married on the Moreno estate, as Felipe greatly desired. Consequently, Ramona left the only home she had ever known. Unknown either to Senora or Felipe, Ramona and Alessandro said "good-bye" to the estate and started on their wanderings. In the meantime the Americans had driven the Indians from their towns and Alessandro's father had died. Henceforth Ramona was known as Majella, the Indian word for wood dove, for such she seemed most like to Alessandro.

When they were married, Ramona gave her name as Majella Phail, thus destroying all trace of Ramona. Almost immediately their troubles began. No matter where Ramona and Alessandro settled, the Indians were continually driven out by the Americans, who claimed they had legal possession of the land. Moreover, "Eyes of the Sky," their first child, died amid all this trouble because they could get no physician to come and render aid. Embittered by all their misfortunes, Ramona and



Alessandro moved to the top of the mountain, thinking that there they might live undisturbed, if not so bountifully. But constant worry so preyed upon Alessandro's mind that he became insane. At times he seemed perfectly all right, but at others, he could comprehend nothing. Here a second child was born, and Ramona had to care for both Alessandro and the child, whom she called Majella for herself. When Alessandro was in one of those spells, he accidentally took the wrong horse for which the owner pursued him and killed him at their very door. Ramona could not weep; she merely covered the lifeless body and hastened to the nearest Indian village to seek aid. Upon reaching it, she fell into a severe fever and remained in this condition many, many days, always cared for by the loving hands of the people. It was here that Felipe found her, still raging with fever—after his long and apparently hopeless search since his mother's death. But Ramona did not die. After several days she regained

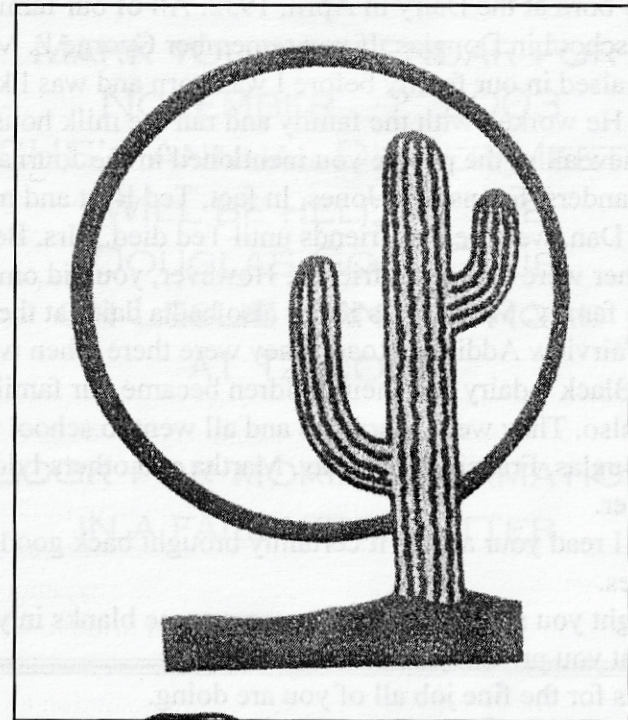
consciousness and recognized Felipe, ever dearly loved by her as her own brother.

When Ramona was able, Felipe took her and the child back to the old estate, where happiness was again restored upon the return of Ramona, but with the return of Ramona, Felipe's old love for her awakened. It was not the love of brother for sister, but that of a suitor. Unable to restrain his feeling, he told Ramona of his love, and although Ramona told him that that part of her was dead—she realized that Felipe loved her as passionately as Alessandro had loved her or as she had loved him—and for this reason she promised to marry him.

On account of the many associations with the estate, Felipe and Ramona moved to Mexico, and here the beautiful young Senora Moreno was the darling of the city, and Felipe thrilled with pride to see the gentle dignity by which she was distinguished in all assemblages. But behind this new life, deep in her loyal, loving heart, undying memories stood like sentinels

in her breast, and when the notes of doves calling to each other reached her ears, from far away she heard a voice saying, "Majella," which was the only secret her true heart had kept from Felipe. Although many sons and

daughters came to bear the Moreno name, the one most beautiful and most beloved by both father and mother was Majella, now known as Ramona; the one who bore her mother's name—daughter of the Indian, Alessandro.





## We Get Letters

Letter to the Editor:

Terry Murray received a copy of the Douglas 100-Year Celebration Historical Journal. My sister, Min Skinner, read it and sent me the Journal to read. She found it very interesting.

I read it today and also was very impressed as it mentioned where I grew up. Our family (Kennon Family) lived in Naco, Arizona, until 1925, and then we moved to Fairview Addition. My folks bought Black's Dairy but never changed the name. I was born Feb. 1926 and was one year old when we moved there. Edna was born at the Dairy in 1928, and Robert Kennon was also born at the Dairy in April, 1932. All of our family went to school in Douglas. If you remember George L. Murray, he was raised in our family before I was born and was like a brother. He worked with the family and ran the milk house.

We knew all of the people you mentioned in the Journal – Bests, Sanders, Evans, and Jones. In fact, Ted Best and my brother, Dan, were best of friends until Ted died. Mrs. Best and my mother were also good friends. However, you did omit one old time family. Mr. Francis Kirby also had a dairy at the north end of Fairview Addition Road. They were there when we bought Black's dairy and their children became our family friends also. They were Mormons and all went to school with us in Douglas. Francis, Nola May, Martha and others I don't remember.

When I read your article it certainly brought back good memories.

I thought you should know there were some blanks in your book that you probably had not heard of.

Thanks for the fine job all of you are doing.

Frank Kennon  
625 W. Berkeley Crt.  
Ontario, CA 91762

## ANNUAL MEETING

### NOTICE

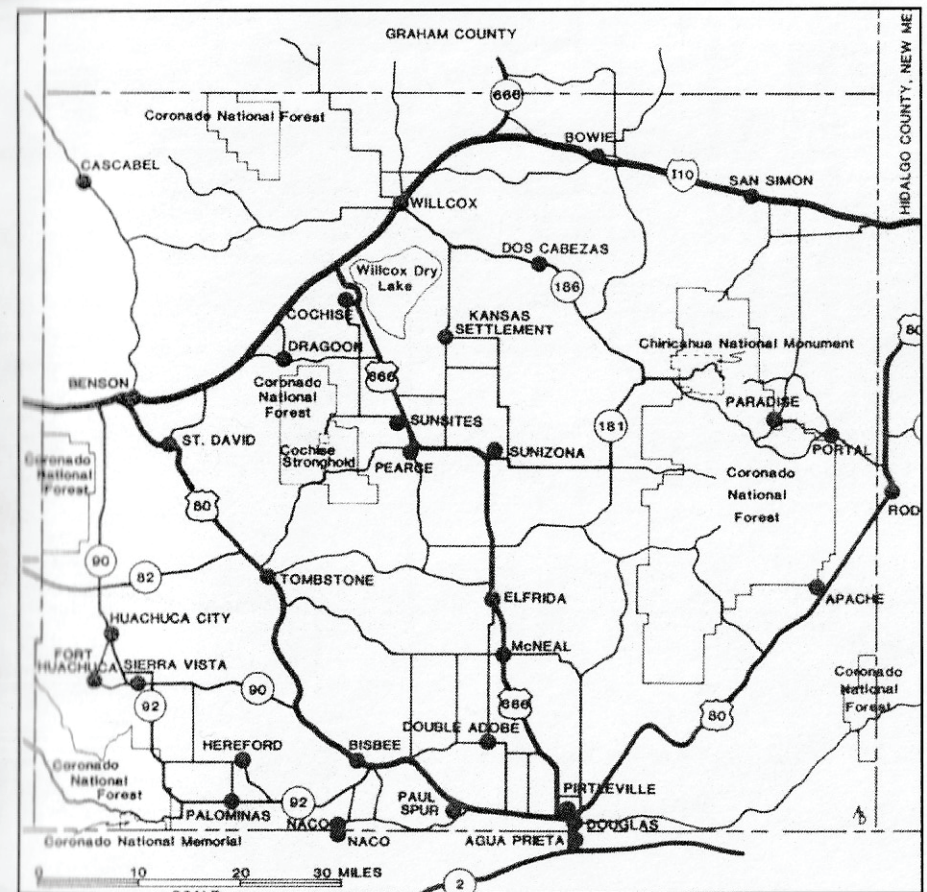
THIS IS AN EARLY REMINDER:

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR  
NOVEMBER 2, 2003  
CCHS'S ANNUAL DINNER MEETING  
WILL BE HELD AT THE  
DOUGLAS GOLF CLUB  
ON LESLIE CANYON ROAD  
AT 12 NOON.

LOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION  
IN A FALL NEWSLETTER.



## Notes



### Cochise County, Arizona

#### Cochise County Historical Society Membership Information

|                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| Individual/family | .....\$20  |
| Business          | .....\$25  |
| Lifetime          | .....\$500 |

Mail to:  
P. O. Box 818  
Douglas, AZ 85608

Dues are paid effective in  
January of each year and  
include one copy of each  
Journal published.